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ABSTRACT

This paper describes how Wichita, Kansas, public school teachers developed a grade K-2 social studies curriculum focusing upon the developmental needs of children. A group of teachers met to examine textbooks and recommend a future social studies basal textbook adoption. They were not pleased with the primary level texts available through publishers. They found that most first grade social studies texts are picture books, with no more than seven to ten words printed on each page. The teachers knew that research indicates that children at the pre-school through second grade levels prefer kinesthetic or motor modes of learning relating to concrete objects. These texts were not appropriate for use with children who have yet to reach a maturational stage relating to abstractions and symbolic forms. So they decided to develop a new primary social studies resource and activities guide based upon a concrete operational model and addressing district-wide K-12 social studies objectives. These objectives and the district's five basic K-12 social studies curriculum strands (which are presented in the paper) became the frame of reference for project development. Superimposed upon these five strands was the traditional "expanding horizons" schema. Activities developed by teachers were arranged in clusters according to how their objectives related to identified behavioral outcomes for each grade level. Many of the activities were interdisciplinary. Since the Fall of 1981, the guide has been implemented in Wichita's 75 elementary schools. Evaluations by teachers have been overwhelmingly positive. (RM)

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PRIMARY SOCIAL STUDIES: A REFOCUS ON THE STUDENT

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A cursory examination of any first grade social studies textbook reveals problems relating to its use at the primary level. What often appears is a picture book, with no more than seven to ten words printed on each page. A striking similarity exists between most social studies "textbooks" written for this level. One can almost recite from memory the litany of chapters and units - familiar family scenes, houses (small and large), farm and urban scenes and the usual list of community helpers such as the police officer, the mail carrier, the grocer, the doctor, etc. These familiar subjects are all presented in "living" color and the quality of the pictures is excellent. Across the country, classroom teachers continue to deal with these impersonal textbook characterizations with the hope that somehow, with the help of God and the teacher's manual, the pages will come "alive" for children who have yet to reach a maturational stage relating to abstractions and symbolic forms. The disturbing fact is that 65 percent of the children in the United States in grades K-3 receive their social studies instruction from textbook programs like these. [1]

Research indicates that children, especially at the pre-school through second grade levels, prefer kinesthetic or motor modes of learning relating to "concrete" objects. [2] Researchers have also observed that children move through sequential modes relating to, first, acting upon phenomena, second, learning through visual forms of materials, and, finally, learning through symbolic forms. [3] Children at the primary level are obviously at the beginning of this three-phase developmental sequence. The

inability of textbook publishers to account for maturational change and sequence within the learning process has, in general, made it necessary for primary teachers to adapt their social studies textbooks piecemeal by re-interpreting the content to fit the developmental profiles of their pupils--needs that could be more directly met if other strategies and materials were available that took these individual profiles into account.

Recently, a social studies textbook selection committee, made up of veteran teachers from the primary and upper elementary grades, met to examine textbooks and recommend a future social studies basal textbook adoption (K-6) for the Wichita Public Schools. These teachers were well aware of the problems relating to the teaching of social studies at the elementary level--that some of their colleagues were no longer teaching primary social studies in the scramble for "back to basics." They also knew that many of their fellow teachers would be less than enthusiastic about any of the possible primary social studies textbooks that might be selected. At this juncture, someone suggested a different approach, the development of a new primary (grades K-2) social studies resource and activities guide, based upon a "concrete" operational model and addressing district-wide K-12 social studies objectives.[4] The new guide would be a "catalog" of hands-on classroom teaching and learning experiences from which the teacher could prescribe specific social studies tasks to meet these objectives. The guide would contain a wealth of resources that would promote a broad interdisciplinary response but the focus would be to the needs of students--needs relating to maturational change and development of childrens' logic systems and sensory modalities.

Needless to say, the committee did not recommend the adoption of a primary social studies textbook program for Wichita, but, instead, began to initiate the development of the new teachers' social studies resource guide.

Initial planning for the new guide included familiarization of the curriculum development committee with the overall educational philosophy and curriculum objectives of the Wichita school district. The relationship between these objectives and the district's five basic K through 12 social studies curriculum strands became the frame of reference for project development. These identified curriculum strands for social studies in Wichita are:

I. The development of a knowledge base for understanding the relationship between human beings and their social and physical environment in global context;

II. The development of a positive self-concept, to move toward greater self-esteem and self-actualization;

III. The development of social studies skills for purposes of solving problems, clarifying issues and communicating and working with others;

IV. The development of an understanding of the origins and interrelationships of beliefs, values and behavior patterns in order to assume value positions rationally and accept the responsibility for the consequences of those value positions;

V. The development and demonstration of a commitment to participation in social affairs to effectively function as a citizen in a democratic society.

Superimposed upon these five strands was the traditional "expanding horizons" social studies curriculum schema that correlates directly with the regular social studies textbook program adopted for grades 3 through 6. Activities developed for the new K-2 guide were arranged in "clusters" according to how their objectives related to identified behavioral outcomes for each grade level (i.e., kindergarten - "Self," first grade - "Home and School," and

second grade - "Neighborhoods.") Care was exercised in the selection of activities to include a balance between the various social science disciplines. The strands of skill development, self concept development, valuing and social participation were also considered as activities were written. If any single social science discipline could be said to have received greatest attention through these activities, it was the discipline of geography. Spatial relationships were believed to be a vital aspect of learning for children at the primary level. At all times throughout the development of the guide, the committee focused upon familiar experiences and concrete objects as they relate to the developmental needs of children.

As specific "activity clusters" were written and approved, the committee drew upon the expertise of primary curriculum consultants, professional literature relating to the needs of primary students and their own wealth of classroom experience. Many activities reflected an interdisciplinary emphasis and contained elements of law-related education, consumer/economic education, career education, environmental education and the global perspective.

The Wichita K-2 Social Studies Guide contains more than 200 classroom activities. Within each grade level, these activities are clustered within organized units (see listing of units and activities for Unit 1, grade 1) and relate to identified learning outcomes. Grade level sections of the guide are color-coded for greater ease of identification. The last section of the guide contains special activities relating to holidays and observances throughout the regular school year that have implications for social studies.

It should be noted that the creativity and imagination of individual classroom teachers are considered as an integral part of the primary social

studies program in Wichita. Instructions within the guide encourage teachers to be selective about which activities they present to their students and to "spin off" with enrichment activities on any aspect of the basic program that they so desire. To facilitate this creative process, each unit in the guide contains extensive listings of all additional teaching resources relating to particular unit objectives and activities (see sample resource list for Unit 4, grade 1.)

Since the Fall of 1981, the guide in its final form has been implemented in Wichita's 75 elementary schools. Evaluations by teachers in 130 classrooms, after the "draft" version of the guide was field-tested for one year, were overwhelmingly positive. The implications of this curricular change for the Wichita district are beyond the original reasons for the effort. There has been a growing awareness on the part of teachers of the significance of social studies as it relates to the teaching of other subjects; also, a broader impact has resulted relating to the wider application of the suggested teaching methodologies.

A recent NSF-sponsored survey reveals that 60 percent of the nation's social studies teachers, <u>regardless of grade level</u>, indicated that they use class discussion "just about daily." [5] The same survey also indicated that role plays, simulations and use of "hands on" materials were less frequently and less extensively used in the elementary grades than lecture and discussion. On the basis of these findings and the knowledge that more than half of our nation's first and second graders are being provided their social studies lessons from basal textbooks, concerns should be expressed regarding the validity of current methodologies and published textual materials.

Development of a primary social studies curriculum focusing upon

the developmental needs of children cannot easily be accomplished by most school districts due to time and budgetary constraints. Along with these restrictions also is the traditional resistance to change often evidenced by teachers whenever any new frame of reference is introduced within an established system of ideas. Many social studies educators believe that the textbook publishing industry holds the "key" to the overall trends in social studies curriculum development and that any significant change must have its support. This belief is especially appreciated by social educators who have weathered the curricular storms and stresses of the decade of the New Social Studies. The transfer of learning away from the traditional basal textbook at the primary level may require the development of a double option by publishers. School districts could be given the choice of purchasing basal textbooks for primary classes or they could opt to teach basic program concepts through a published activities and resource guide, stressing the developmental approach. Until major publishers see the advantage of providing such a guide, it will be up to local school districts to provide materials suitable to the developmental needs of students.

The difference is really between recurring perceptions of how people believe children <u>should</u> learn and our recent discoveries of how they <u>do</u> learn. "Developmental research suggests that learning problems will continue to occur as long as basal texts emphasizing symbolic forms dominate and remain the nearly exclusive medium of social studies instruction in the elementary and middle school grades." [6]

BASIC UNITS BY GRADE LEVEL
FOR THE WICHITA K-2 SOCIAL STUDIES GUIDE

KINDERGARTEN - 55 Activities Total

Unit I - Who Am I?

Unit II - How I Work and Play

Unit III - How I Feel

Unit IV - Changes I See

Unit V - Where Am I?

FIRST GRADE - 80 Activities Total

Unit I - People Live In Families

Unit II - The School Community

Unit III - Families Needs and Wants

SECOND GRADE- 70 Activities Total

Unit I -What Is A Good Neighbor?

Unit II -What Is A Neighborhood?

Unit III -Neighborhoods Change

Unit IV -Neighborhoods Work Together

Unit V -Places In The Neighborhood

Unit VI -World Neighborhoods

SOCIAL STUDIES HOLIDAYS - 15 Holidays (40 Ungraded Activities)

LIST OF FIRST GRADE ACTIVITIES BY UNIT
(WICHITA K-2 SOCIAL STUDIES GUIDE)

UNIT I
- People Live in Families
  - Differences and Likenesses
  - TV Fun
  - Things We Do To Help
  - Who Does What?
  - I'm a Helper
  - Fun With My Family
  - Working Together At Home
  - Changes In My Family
  - Conflicts and Resolutions
  - I Care About Others
  - Past and Present
  - Past and Present Pictures
  - Who Am I?
  - Growing Up
  - Parents Were Little Too
  - Now and Then
  - My Family And I
  - Word Search
  - Bibliography and Resources

UNIT II
- The School Community
  - Exploration Party
  - What Do You Do?
  - Sharing Responsibilities
  - The Custodian
  - Equal Opportunity Employer
  - Helping Hands
  - Riddle Fun
  - Getting Along
  - Warm Fuzzies
  - Make Room For Others
  - Rules Help Us
  - Courteous Words - Mobiles
  - Courtesy Ratings
  - Picking Pals
  - Advising Friends
  - Keeping Friends
  - Schools: Past and Present
  - Out of the Past
  - Special Guest
  - Bibliography and Resources

UNIT III
- Families - Needs and Wants
  - Needs and Wants
  - What I Need the Most
  - Do I Need It Or Want It?
  - Families - Needs and Wants
  - Camping Trip
  - Our Parents Work
  - Too Many Chiefs
  - Whose Hat?
  - Somebody Goofed
  - "Gnurble" Assembly Line
  - Potato Prints
  - What Does It Take?
  - What's Cooking?
  - That's Impossible!
  - Who Am I?
  - Me and Everything I Want
  - Scarcity
  - Chip Exchange
  - Bunny Farm
  - Crazy Sentences
  - Shipwreck
  - Shelter
  - Making Shelters
  - Bibliography and Resources

UNIT IV
- Families and Places
  - Seasons
  - Clothes We Need
  - Writing Pals
  - Paste in Space
  - Mapping the Classroom
  - Playground Map
  - Map a Fairy Tale
  - Symbols
  - Natural or Man-made
  - Pathways at School
  - Maps Show Job Availability
  - Maps Are Pictures
  - Location and Direction
  - Four Main Directions
  - Arrows
  - Land and Water
  - Day and Night
  - Match Games
  - Treasure Hunt
  - Bibliography and Resources

SAMPLE RESOURCE LIST FOR UNIT IV, GRADE 1
(FAMILIES AND PLACES)

BOOKS		
Clark	The Desert People	Viking
Miles	Annie and The Old One	Little
Rinkoff	A Map Is A Picture	Crowell
FLAT PICTURES		
System Media Center	Children of America	Children's World
System Media Center	Families Around the World	Silver Burdett
System Media Center	Family Lifestyles Around the World	Cook
System Media Center	Other People Around Me	Bowmar
RECORDINGS (TAPE)		
Murdock Teacher Center	Human Relations (open ended stories)	International Teaching Tapes
SOUND FILMSTRIPS		
System Media Center	Beginning Concepts 2	Scholastic
	Day Night Heavy Light	
	In Out Roundabout	
	Show Fast First Last	
	Ears Nose Fingers Toes	
	Kitten Pup Growing Up	
Murdock Teacher Center	Career Development for Primary Grades	EMC
Instructional Material Center	Children of the Plains Indians	
System Media Center	Exploring the Seasons	Imperial
System Media Center	Families Around the World	Field
System Media Center	Five Families	Scholastic
	Chinatown: The Yongs	
	Circus Family	
	Pinata: A Family in Phoenix	
	Together: A Family in New York City	
	Yah-a-Tay: A Navajo Family	
Murdock Teacher Center	Other People, Places, Things	Learning Tree
System Media Center	Six Families in The U.S.	EBE
FILMS		
Instructional Materials Center	Autumn Comes to the Forest	
"	Maps and Landmarks	
"	Maps Show Our Earth	
"	Spring Comes to the Forest	
"	Winter Comes to the Forest	

KITS - Instructional Materials Center

Japanese Family
Telling Time
A Week in Daniel's World
A Week in Aya's World-Ivory Coast
A Week in Hagar's World-Israel
A Week in Robert's World-The South
A Week in Yani's World-Greece

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